DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 230 CE 076 081

AUTHOR	Grubb, W. Norton; Badway, Norena
TITLE	Linking School-Based and Work-Based Learning: The Implications of LaGuardia's Co-op Seminars for School-to-Work Programs.
INSTITUTION	National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Berkeley, CA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-03-00
NOTE	39p.
CONTRACT	V051A30004-97A; V051A30003-97A
AVAILABLE FROM	NCRVE Materials Distribution Service, Western Illinois University, 46 Horrabin Hall, Macomb, IL 61455; toll-free phone: 800-637-7652 (order no. MDS-1046: $3.25).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Career Education; *Career Exploration; Community Colleges; *Cooperative Education; *Education Work Relationship; Experiential Learning; *Program Effectiveness; *Required Courses; School Business Relationship; *Seminars; Two Year Colleges; Vocational Education; Work Attitudes; Work Ethic; Work Experience
IDENTIFIERS	*City University of New York La Guardia Comm Coll

ABSTRACT

The cooperative education program at LaGuardia Community College, New York, incorporates seminars that integrate school- and work-based learning. In the seminars, students examine issues related to work in general, the organizations in which they are placed, and the ways in which their academic preparation is applied at the work site. The cooperative education program, which is mandatory for all full-time students, includes the following: a course that prepares students for their first co-op placement; planning sessions with a faculty advisor; three internships or placements; and three distinct levels of seminars taken in conjunction with each internship. The first and third levels may be specific to a student's chosen area of study or, may be generic, focusing on common workplace issues. All students take the second seminar, "Fundamentals of Career Advancement," which focuses on using the workplace to gain information about skills and personal requirements for upward mobility. Seminars allow students to explore careers, master skills and competencies common to all jobs, and explore social, ethical, political, and moral themes associated with working. Instructional methods in seminars are traditional lecture, class discussion, simulations, role-play, and faculty sharing of personal experiences. Seminar effectiveness depends on these factors: instructor background, training, and understanding of the seminar's purpose; instructional methods; and integration of the program into the larger college curriculum. The work-based component must become central to the educational purposes of the institution. (Contains 18 references.) (YLB)

NCRVE

National Center for Research in Vocational Education

University of California, Berkeley

Linking School-Based and Work-Based Learning: The Implications of Laguardia's Co-op Seminars for School-to-Work Programs

Supported by
the Office of Vocational and Adult Education,
U.S. Department of Education

This publication is available from the:

National Center for Research in Vocational Education
Materials Distribution Service
Western Illinois University
46 Horrabin Hall
Macomb, IL 61455

800-637-7652 (Toll Free)

LINKING SCHOOL-BASED AND WORK-BASED LEARNING: THE IMPLICATIONS OF LAGUARDIA'S CO-OP SEMINARS FOR SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

W. Norton Grubb
Norena Badway

University of California at Berkeley

National Center for Research in Vocational Education
University of California at Berkeley
2030 Addison Street, Suite 500
Berkeley, CA 94720-1674

Supported by
The Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education

March 1998

MDS-1046

FUNDING INFORMATION

Project Title:	National Center for Research in Vocational Education
Grant Number:	V051A30003-97A/V051A30004-97A
Act under which Funds Administered:	Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act P.L. 98-524
Source of Grant:	Office of Vocational and Adult Education U.S. Department of Education Washington, DC 20202
Grantee:	The Regents of the University of California c/o National Center for Research in Vocational Education 2030 Addison Street, Suite 500 Berkeley, CA 94720-1674
Director:	David Stern
Percent of Total Grant Financed by Federal Money:	100%
Dollar Amount of Federal Funds for Grant:	$4,500,000

Related Readings from NCRVE

for **Linking School-Based and Work-Based Learning: The Implications of LaGuardia's Co-op Seminars for School-to-Work Programs** (MDS-1046)

by W. Norton Grubb and Norena Badway

Linking College and Work: Exemplary Practices in Two-Year College Work-Based Learning Programs

What makes work-based learning programs in two-year colleges succeed? What gets in the way? This report provides the detailed analysis needed to improve and expand work-based learning programs. An in-depth study of ten programs clarifies the success factors of good programs. *Linking College and Work* will be invaluable to practitioners and policymakers involved in planning for the future of work-based learning programs. Edited by D. D. Bragg, R. E. Hamm.
MDS-795/April 1996/$18.00

Co-operative Education in Cincinnati: Implications for School-to-Work Programs in the U.S.

The recent school-to-work legislation mandates work-based learning, one form of which is cooperative education. Yet individuals developing these programs have so far had few models from which to learn. This report offers an in-depth study of cooperative education in the Cincinnati area, where it has had a long and successful history. The authors—Norton Grubb, NCRVE's Berkeley site director, and Jennifer Curry Villeneuve—describe conditions crucial to exemplary co-op programs, including a "high-quality equilibrium" of students and work experiences, sustained by the commitment and close working relationships of employers and schools. By W. N. Grubb, J. C. Villeneuve.
MDS-1045/December 1995/$5.50

A Sourcebook for Reshaping the Community College: Curriculum Integration and the Multiple Domains of Career Preparation

Vol. I: Framework and Examples. Vol. II: Samples of Career Preparation Innovations

Much confusion exists over the ways in which community colleges can address workforce preparation while fulfilling traditional educational goals. *A Sourcebook for Reshaping the Community College* clarifies this issue by identifying seven "domains of competency" that synthesize (1) the needs expressed by employers, (2) the skills students need to progress through postsecondary education and the labor market, and (3) the knowledge that educators have always wanted for their students. Volume II offers exemplary curricula from community colleges and technical institutes across the nation. Educators at all community colleges and technical institutes will find this sourcebook useful in planning and implementing workforce development reforms. By N. Badway, W. N. Grubb.
MDS-782/October 1997/$17.50

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is based on two visits to LaGuardia Community College: one by Norton Grubb in October 1993 to examine both learning communities and the co-op program as part of a larger study of teaching in community colleges, and a second by Norena Badway in April 1995 to look more specifically at the co-op program and the co-op seminars. We want to thank the many administrators and instructors at LaGuardia; we experienced the greatest openness and cooperation in our visits. We particularly would like to thank Harry Heinemann, Dean of Cooperative Education; Catherine Farrell, Associate Dean of Cooperative Education; Jeff Weintraub, Director of Research Evaluation and Systems; Julio Ortiz, college assistant in Cooperative Education; and Roberta Matthews, Dean of Instruction. We received helpful comments on an earlier draft from Harry Heinemann and Catherine Farrell, as well as from Gregg Duncan and John Wirt of the Office of Technology Assessment. Some of this research has been supported by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, the University of California at Berkeley, under a grant from the Department of Education. The analyses and interpretations in this paper are our own, however.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the key challenges in vocational education is how to effectively connect school-based and work-based learning. This monograph describes the mandatory cooperative education program at LaGuardia Community College in New York City, and the series of seminars that integrate school-based and work-based learning. In the seminars, students examine a variety of issues related to work in general, the organizations in which they are placed, and the ways in which their academic preparation is applied at the work site. Because the multiple elements of a successful program have been considered carefully at LaGuardia, the seminars provide a model that is equally applicable at the secondary or postsecondary levels.

This college is explicit about the role of work-based learning: "LaGuardia's educational philosophy is that learning takes place in many different settings both in and outside the classroom." Cooperative education is mandatory for all full-time students at LaGuardia, including a course that prepares students for their first co-op placement; planning sessions with a faculty advisor; three internships or placements; and seminars which are taken in conjunction with each internship.

There are three distinct levels of seminars. The first and third may be specific to a student's chosen area of study, or may be generic, focusing on common workplace issues. All students take the second seminar, "Fundamentals of Career Advancement," which focuses on using the workplace to gain information about skills and personal requirements for upward mobility. The seminars allow students to actively explore careers; to master skills and competencies common to all jobs; and to explore social, ethical, political, and moral themes associated with working.

While the structure and role of the co-op seminar is sound, its effectiveness also depends on other factors. These include the background and training of the instructor, his or her understanding of the seminar's purposes, the instructional methods used, and the integration of the program into the larger college curriculum. The study concludes that the work-based component must become so central to the educational purposes of institutions that, even in times of scarce resources, it becomes as unthinkable to give it up as it would be to abandon math, English, or science.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

How best to prepare for work? Historically, work itself was the only way of preparing for work—at a father's right hand, near a mother's knee, in apprenticeship programs both formal and informal, or through on-the-job training. But these methods have their own limitations and politics: they may not be effective for complex occupations, they often limit the range of occupations an individual can consider, and—particularly as the pressures of profit-making have taken over, in the long decline of apprenticeship during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—they may be more exploitive than nurturing. And so, school-based preparation has gradually taken over from work-based preparation, both in the specific sense that professional and occupational education prepares individuals for employment, and in the more general sense that a great deal of schooling is justified by its value in employment.

But not without a sense of loss: The view that school-based preparation is inadequate—too "academic," too removed from the realities of work—has persisted throughout this century. Various reforms have emerged to develop work-based learning either as a substitute for or a complement to school-based learning: in co-op education programs established in 1906; in the continuation schools envisioned by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917; in the internships that developed in the schools of the Eight-Year Study; and in the work experience programs of the 1970s. The most recent renewal of interest in work-based learning is the School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) of 1994, which provides federal seed money for school-to-work (STW) programs incorporating both school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities to make the two consistent with each other.

In trying to design STW programs, there are relatively few examples or models in this country from which individuals attempting to develop new programs might learn. The recent experimental efforts are too new or too special to provide much guidance, and many earlier efforts to develop work-based learning have either disappeared or are small in numbers.[1] The exemplars of connecting activities are particularly scarce, since with few examples of work-based learning, there has been no reason to elaborate mechanisms to

[1] For efforts to examine the existing experimental programs, see Hamilton (1990); Goldberger, Kazis, and O'Flanagan (1994); and Pauly, Kopp, and Haimson (1995); for efforts to distill the lessons of existing work-based learning, see Stern, Finkelstein, Stone, Latting, and Dornsife (1995).

coordinate it with school-based learning. However, in the search for possible models, there exist a handful of cooperative education programs of relatively long standing that can provide some guidance for emerging STW programs.

In this paper, we examine a particular kind of connecting activity: the co-op seminars developed as part of the Cooperative Education Program at LaGuardia Community College in New York City. The co-op seminars, taken by students while they are in co-op placements, are intended to raise general issues about work, about occupations in general, and about the competencies required on the job. They serve as a mechanism of connecting a particular kind of school-based learning—the learning that takes place in the seminars themselves—with experiences on the job; but they also serve as a form of career exploration and a way of linking occupational students with some of the larger issues generally associated with the moral, political, and intellectual purposes of schooling. The co-op seminars have been an integral part of the co-op program since its inception, and have been continuously changed and elaborated since then, so they represent a well-considered effort to link school-based and work-based learning. While they have been developed in a community college, the possibilities they offer and the warnings they provide are equally applicable at the high school level, where much of the energy in developing STW programs will be concentrated.

In the first section, we will describe the co-op program at LaGuardia Community College, since it provides the setting within which the co-op seminars take place. In the second section, we describe the structure and purpose of the co-op seminars. In the third section, we describe a number of co-op seminars we observed in order to illustrate the variety of pedagogical strategies that different instructors use. Finally, the implications of the co-op seminar are examined in the fourth section, assessing how it might be used in other STW programs and outlining a series of problems that all STW programs must confront as they attempt to integrate school-based with work-based learning.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

When LaGuardia Community College was established in 1971, its first president established a culture of innovation and experimentation that, according to faculty and administrators, has persisted to this day. In part, this culture represented an effort to develop a particular niche at a time when several community colleges were being established in New York. The spirit of innovation was also a vision of what a community college might be, since this institution was relatively unfettered by any long history of institutional orthodoxy or regulatory imperatives. Over the years, there have been two major sources of innovation. From its inception, LaGuardia has been a mandatory co-op college, in which all full-time students are required to enroll in cooperative education.[2] The rationales for co-op were and remain those commonly associated with cooperative education: the opportunity to learn in different ways, to connect school-based learning to its applications, to explore occupational alternatives, and to earn money while in school. In addition, LaGuardia embodies an unusual commitment to teaching, expressed specifically in a series of learning communities and in staff development designed to expand innovative teaching practices like cooperative learning and project-based education (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990; Matthews, 1994).

In other ways, however, LaGuardia is the epitome of a community college, particularly in the composition of its students and its embodiment of the "people's college." The variety of races, languages, and ages at LaGuardia is almost overwhelming, even for two observers from California accustomed to great variation in community college students. There are 84 languages, and so many racial and ethnic groups that the familiar categories—black, Hispanic, Asian, or white—lose their meaning. LaGuardia is in many ways an educational representation of Emma Lazarus' stirring words on the nearby Statue of Liberty:

> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me:
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

---

[2] To our knowledge, the only other community colleges with mandatory co-op are Cincinnati Technical College and the Ohio College of Applied Science, both in Cincinnati. These programs and their implications for STW programs are analyzed in Grubb, Dickinson, Giordano, and Kaplan (1992); Grubb (1995); Grubb and Villeneuve (1995); and Villeneuve and Grubb (1996).

In the co-op program, every full-time student—including those majoring in liberal arts—is required to enroll in three 12-week internships or co-op placements, varying from 15 to 40 hours per week, depending on the internship agency needs and the student's schedule.[3] Certain students are exempted from the co-op requirement, including those in areas that have their own practicums (like nursing) and evening students who are assumed to have jobs and, therefore, not to need the introduction to employment that co-op provides.[4] In theory, the three placements may progress from relatively introductory positions to more skilled and demanding employment, and this tends to happen in technical fields; however, when students use the co-op for career exploration, as is common for liberal arts students, this kind of progression is difficult to achieve. Students may receive credit by exemption for one co-op based on submission of a written analysis of prior work experience, or may waive co-op if they have had substantial work experience in their chosen major. Those who are currently employed may request to use their employment as an internship site or may attend an internship for as few as 15 hours per week. Students earn 9 of the 66 credits they need to graduate from the three co-op education courses, with the course defined as an internship and a seminar. Because they are considered students while in co-op, they generate city and state revenue that is used to support the co-op program (and, in turn, the co-op faculty) and pay tuition equal to a 12 credit load.[5]

Students must have completed all the prerequisites for a major—which generally requires having completed coursework in remedial education or English as a Second Language (ESL) if necessary—as well as at least one introductory course in their major, and they must maintain a 2.0 average. These are mechanisms of quality control, of course, but they also mean that there are substantial numbers of students enrolled at the college who are not participating in co-op. For example, in fall 1994, there were 10,592 students enrolled in LaGuardia, with about 500 in co-op. However, of the 10,592 students, only 2,308 were eligible for co-op; the remainder were in majors that do not participate in co-op because they have their own practicum, were evening students for whom co-op is not required, had not yet completed the prerequisites for co-op, or had low GPAs that

[3] On the nature of co-op at LaGuardia, see Nesoff et al. (1990) and Weintraub (1992).

[4] However, a large fraction of the evening students are there to change their occupations, for which co-op would be valuable; and a small number of evening students do enroll in co-op.

[5] The funding mechanism for the LaGuardia co-op program, through regular attendance-based state revenue, is therefore similar to the funding in the Cincinnati programs. One administrator reported that the co-op placements generate about 4% of LaGuardia's overall revenue.

disqualified them. As a result, while only 5% of all students were in co-op, about 22% of eligible students were in co-op.

Faculty in the Cooperative Education Division have full faculty status and fulfill several roles. All faculty members advise students, assisting them in setting individual learning objectives for the co-op experience, in selecting each co-op placement, and in evaluating and grading the internship experience; co-op faculty also teach the Co-op Preparation (Co-op Prep) course. In addition, each faculty member develops and coordinates a number of internship sites, acting as a liaison between internship supervisors and students by screening students for those sites, arranging interviews with internship supervisors, and visiting the internship site during the internship period. Students may work with two faculty if they select an internship that is coordinated by a faculty member other than their advisor. Also, some faculty elect to teach one of the co-op seminars, and are paid adjunct stipends for this additional responsibility. This arrangement provides continuity of advisement for students and continuity of coordination for internship placement sites.

The college publishes an updated listing of potential internship sites four times a year describing co-op placements available in various major areas[6], and each student receives faculty assistance in the selection of a placement. The kinds of co-op placements are, not surprisingly, quite varied. Co-op faculty report that many positions have been offered continuously over a number of years, with a number of agencies, such as hospitals, offering a mix of internships (including clerical, patient care, accounting, and customer service). Placements in public and private enterprises differ in a number of ways. Public agencies usually accept both part- and full-time interns, usually offer volunteer rather than paid positions, are able to provide paraprofessional types of experiences, and have negligible hire rates following the internships. Private firms tend to offer less varied experiences initially, expanding responsibilities as the student demonstrates the capacity to work well; they generally prefer a full-time commitment, provide a wage or stipend (usually in the range of $6 to $8 an hour), and often offer employment to students

[6] The majors at LaGuardia include accounting, animal health technology, bilingual teaching aide, business administration, business management, commercial food service, commercial photography, computer science, computer operations, computer technology, data processing, dietary technician, emergency medical technician, human services, liberal arts, liberal arts and sciences, mortuary science, nursing, occupational therapy, office technology, physical therapy, secretarial science, school food service, and travel and tourism. All of the licensure programs require a practicum whose content is dictated by the state, and are not included in the co-op program.

following the internship. Workplace supervisors in both the public and private sectors were forthright about their determination to match the task to the student's ability, and to increase responsibility as the student demonstrates competency. In addition, all of the supervisors and faculty we interviewed warned against assuming that co-op placements involve only low-level skills, pointing out that new technologies and workplace organizations require sophisticated decisionmaking, problem solving with clients, gathering of and organizing data, and knowledge of the company structure for all employees. Contrary to conventional wisdom about the need for contracts or written agreements about placements, co-op positions are based on informal oral agreements between employers and co-op faculty.[7]

The co-op program has a well-developed rationale, which has been elaborated over the years. The *Cooperative Education Student Handbook* (Nesoff et al., 1990) describes its three purposes[8]:

1. To explore various career interests, or confirm career plans.

2. To applying classroom learning to real situations.

3. To practice and/or strengthen interpersonal or work-related skills.

A more complex description of learning objectives includes the following:

- To use the skills learned in academic classes.
- To learn new knowledge and skills related to career goals.
- To improve interpersonal, communication, and problem-solving skills.
- To explore career opportunities.
- To set personal goals and find ways to achieve them.
- To increase self-understanding, assertiveness, and resourcefulness.

---

[7] The same informal structure is also true in the Cincinnati co-op programs, profiled in Grubb and Villeneuve (1995) and Villeneuve and Grubb (1996).

[8] These and many other elements of the co-op programs and the integrative seminars are stated consistently in different college publications. It seems, therefore, that there has been a conscious effort to develop a uniform vision of the co-op program, and then to convey that vision consistently throughout the program.

- To assert needs and desires in work situations.
- To learn how work is organized and how people behave in work settings.
- To develop moral reasoning and judgment in work situations.
- To become aware of social issues and problems such as sexual harassment, racial discrimination, unemployment, and economic cycles.
- To learn and become familiar with American society (for foreign students).
- To understand the different roles and interests of owners, managers and workers. (Weintraub, 1992)

At an even more general level, Harry Heinemann (1983)—for many years the Dean of Cooperative Education programs—has served as a kind of theoretician of co-op and of the role of the co-op seminar. He first articulated a model of co-op in which classroom instruction drove the co-op experience, and in which work placements were "field laboratories" in which concepts and theories introduced in the class would be applied or observed on the job. A more recent version (Heinemann, DeFalco, & Smelkinson, 1991) acknowledged that this earlier model was limited because it restricted the lessons of work-based learning to the perspectives of a single discipline; in the most recent articulation, work-based placements should be viewed from a variety of disciplines, and the work experience (rather than the classroom learning) should become more central. As is apparent in the next section, LaGuardia currently operates co-op seminars under each of these rationales. Elsewhere he has clarified the Deweyan roots of co-op education as "an educational experience that will integrate the world beyond the classroom and the curriculum" (Heinemann & DeFalco, 1990, p. 39). As a result, one can find at LaGuardia a highly developed conception of the role of co-op within a broader education.

However, the extent to which co-op faculty and adjunct instructors understand the complexity of these goals for co-op education is unclear. To be sure, the faculty and adjunct instructors we interviewed were highly committed to co-op, and understood it as an important complement to class-based instruction. However, most of them stated that the purposes of co-op at LaGuardia were not written down and—not surprisingly, for a program with many different facets—they stressed different aspects of co-op, just as

instructors everywhere differ in their conceptions of education and of which elements are most important. One stated that, "You should know the rationale for this class; in my opinion, it is to adhere to career exploration," while others were clearly more committed to conveying specific information or to communicating the norms of the workplace. In the classes we observed (described in the section titled, "The Conduct of the Co-op Seminars"), these differences emerged as varying emphases in the material presented, with some possibilities ignored by certain instructors. One implication of the variety of perspectives about co-op education is that, in order to realize the potential of the many different forms of learning that can take place with the help of work-based learning, instructors need to understand this variety of purposes.

The co-op program at LaGuardia has many elements to it, and the college has been careful to articulate the role of each of them. There are nine sources of learning:

1. *The Co-op Prep Course*: This is an introductory course to cooperative education in which students are automatically enrolled following the completion of basic skills' prerequisites and at least one introductory course in their major, ideally prior to accumulating 18 credit hours. Co-op Prep is a 12-hour course in which students assess their accomplishments, skills, and interests; gain an understanding of pluralism as it relates to one's self-worth and work; evaluate work needs; learn to devise individual internship and career learning objectives; write a résumé; and participate in a mock interview.

2. *Meetings with the Co-op Faculty Advisor*: Following the Co-op Prep course, each student meets individually with his or her co-op advisor to develop learning objectives for the internship experiences, and to select internship sites. Later, the advisor also works with students to resolve any difficulties related to the internship and to evaluate internships when they are complete.

3. *Work Environment*: The site where the internship takes place.

4. *Job Tasks*: The specific tasks which the intern performs on the internship.

5. *Learning Objectives*: The faculty advisor and the student develop specific learning objectives for each internship. Objectives fall into the categories of strengthening

interpersonal or technical skills; exploring career opportunities; and applying classroom learning to the internship site.

6. *Co-Workers*: The permanent employees with whom the intern interacts at the internship site.

7. *Work Supervisor*: The intern's immediate supervisor at the internship site.

8. *Faculty Coordinator Site Visit*: The interaction between the student and the faculty coordinator for the internship site during the internship review and evaluation visit.

9. *The Co-op Seminar*: A six-week evening or weekend course taken in conjunction with the internship (and the subject of the next two sections of this paper).

The purpose of this extensive list is that the college clarifies, to students and to employers alike, that there are many distinct elements of cooperative education: It is not simply a job whose implications for learning are taken for granted, but an experience where many different elements contribute to the overall learning that takes place.

In addition to the co-op seminar itself, several other elements of the co-op program could be viewed as connecting activities. The co-op faculty advisor is obviously the most crucial link between the institution (and, in turn, the student) and the employer. In addition, the Co-op Prep course is a kind of connecting activity that could be adopted in all STW programs. This 12-hour course introduces students to the co-op program, starting with the following rationale for co-op: "LaGuardia's educational philosophy is that learning takes place in many different settings both in and outside the classroom." Co-op Prep also prepares students for their first co-op placement by developing both their behavioral and their general job-related competencies. It teaches them some of the skills necessary for finding a co-op placement, including those of writing résumés, filling out applications, interviewing for jobs, and the like. During the course, students are asked to state their "life accomplishments" and to consider their own skills and proclivities, and, therefore, the course is related to career exploration—one of the prominent purposes of the co-op seminar as well. To be sure, such activities are common in occupationally related programs; however, the advantage of the Co-op Prep course is that the application of these skills is immediate, as students use them as they begin to search for co-op placements. Indeed, from our observations of several Co-op Prep classes, the anxiety of students preparing to

go out on a real interview for a real job is so high that some version of co-op preparation is crucial.

From the conception of nine separate sources of learning, and the elaboration of such elements as Co-op Prep and the co-op seminar, it is clear that LaGuardia has thought hard over a long period of time about the multiple elements of a successful program. One implication for STW programs, then, is that they should not simply be considered as ways to add work placements to school-based programs. Instead, STW programs need to be considered as a complex series of experiences, combining a variety of both in-school and out-of-school activities, each of which can contribute to the overall quality of learning.

A final and crucial aspect of LaGuardia's co-op program is its relationship to the rest of the institution. The co-op faculty have full faculty status and, therefore, participate in all governance process mechanisms and in the staff development activities of the college. In addition, there have been many cases of collaboration between co-op and other departments; for example, the development of curriculum materials and the T.A.R. approach (which is described later in this monograph) was a joint activity involving both co-op faculty and occupational faculty. There have been joint activities in curriculum planning, identifying workplace applications relevant to coursework, initiating new courses or programs, and sharing in professional development. The co-op program has worked with the English department in terms of how to bolster student writing, and with humanities faculty about how to increase oral communication skills; a mandatory human, technology and society course for all liberal arts majors was jointly developed with co-op faculty; a math instructor helped develop the co-op seminar; and co-op faculty jointly developed the Education Associate curriculum, now in the social sciences department. However, despite the frequency of these forms of collaboration, they seem to focus on particular tasks and then evaporate. There are no ongoing or systematic efforts to coordinate the content of "regular" (non-co-op) classes with the co-op placements; most of the non-co-op faculty have little awareness of what takes place in the co-op program; and few faculty make use of co-op experiences in their classes.

Over the years, there has not been a systematic effort to "market" co-op to the regular faculty, and so, the special benefits of co-op education are unknown to many faculty. The sense of LaGuardia as a unique "co-op college" has therefore dissipated as new faculty have joined and as the number of part-time faculty loosely connected to the

institution have grown. To some extent, then, the co-op program has the feel of an appendage, serving large numbers of students, yet in some way peripheral to the core of the institution. This illustrates the problem with maintaining innovative educational practices over time, particularly in institutions with new faculty and part-time faculty who come in with much more conventional notions of what colleges are.

A potentially dire consequence of the separation of co-op from "regular" programs is occurring now, with a budget crisis of unprecedented magnitude. The CUNY System, of which LaGuardia is a part, has called for budget cuts up to 40%. This situation has unleashed a war of all against all, in which co-op education is particularly vulnerable because of its peripheral and non-course status. In particular, many faculty have been looking to cut the 9-credit co-op requirement because of a need to find credits for remedial purposes in already crowded student schedules.

In this respect, unfortunately, LaGuardia is no different from the other exemplary co-op programs we have examined. In the two-year colleges in Cincinnati, the mandatory co-op programs are also virtually independent of the classroom-based component (Grubb & Villeneuve, 1995; Villeneuve & Grubb, 1996). This kind of separation not only reduces the potential for school-based and work-based components to reinforce one another, it also creates political problems, particularly in periods of declining resources. The co-op administrators at Cincinnati Technical College have been nervous about the future role of co-op as that institution becomes a comprehensive community college, since they fear that an academic component will diminish the perceived importance of co-op. For STW programs, the separation of school-based and work-based components—even in institutions with exemplary co-op programs of long standing—indicates how difficult it may be to knit the two together.

THE STRUCTURE AND ROLE OF THE CO-OP SEMINAR

The co-op seminar was part of LaGuardia's program since its inception. It was originally conceived as an opportunity to reflect on work placements—that is, to convert what might otherwise be ordinary employment into a truly educational experience. The early seminars were quite loosely structured, and came under criticism from students who complained about having to give up precious evenings and weekends for what seemed to be ordinary rap sessions. In response, the seminars have been developed over time, with much more carefully defined purposes, structure, and curricula.

During each of the three internships, students attend a co-op seminar once a week for two hours, for a total of 12 hours. The co-op seminars are scheduled in the evening or on Saturdays, so as not to interfere with normal work hours. In general terms, the co-op seminar provides a framework for analyzing and evaluating students' internship experiences, linking work experience with critical analysis and reflection. The co-op seminar is not used to deal with personal difficulties at the internship site; instead, these are managed through individual counseling and planning sessions with the co-op advisor. Rather, the LaGuardia model conceives of work experience as a field laboratory for applying concepts introduced in the seminar and for collecting data to analyze in the seminar. Students then analyze the results of their data via written exercises and group discussion. The internship or field experience is characterized as participant observation, applying research methodologies such as interviewing, identifying critical incidents, document review, and systematic observation (Heinemann et al., 1991). The internship enriches the learning process of the classroom seminar in multiple ways, leading students to appreciate the role of each worker within an organization and the larger issues of organizational systems and processes.

The college has identified eight goals for students in the seminars[9]:

1. To gain meaning from the day-to-day occurrences of the internship.

2. To broaden understanding of theoretical concepts as they apply to real-life situations.

[9] See "The Internship Seminar" on page 102 of the *1994/95 LaGuardia Community College Catalog*.

3. To develop insights into the relationship of the self to work and to the larger society.

4. To understand personal values and strengthen awareness and appreciation of differences.

5. To understand the steps required in the career decisionmaking process to plan for professional mobility and lifelong learning.

6. To develop the personal and professional skills and strategies that will facilitate success in the next stages of life.

7. To enhance a broad array of skills for success in the workplace.

8. To encourage contributions to the community and become responsible citizens of a multicultural society.

There are three levels of co-op seminars, each taken during one of the three co-op placements. The first and third co-op seminar may either be generic, focusing on general workplace issues, or major-specific, focusing on applications particular to a student's major area. Whether a seminar is generic or major-specific depends upon a student's schedule and the college's ability to generate high enough attendance to justify a class for a specific major. The second level seminar, "Fundamentals of Career Advancement," is common to all students.

Level 1 Seminars

There are five major-specific seminars[10] and one generic seminar offered at Level 1. At this initial phase, topics include information gathering, data organization, quality standards, maintaining currency in technical skills, and other issues specific to the major. Examples of classroom activities include working as teams to identify data from financial reports, using case studies to evaluate information and hardware systems, brainstorming questions to ask in an interview, and simulated production exercises. Examples of field assignments include describing document flow at the internship site,

[10] The five Level 1 major-specific seminars are (1) Accounting Information Systems, (2) Application of Computer Information Systems: Concepts in the Workplace, (3) Management Principles: Theory and Application, (4) Introduction to Teaching, and (5) School Food Service Management I.

analyzing span of control and specialization, identifying services available in a school neighborhood, evaluating quality standards in school food service, and listing job classifications within the students' internship departments. In addition, students are led through a series of activities which apply technical skills formerly mastered in a classroom setting such as identifying document purposes and information flows.

The generic Level 1 seminar, "Understanding Critical Issues at Work," allows multidisciplinary perspectives on common aspects of the workplace. In classroom exercises, students apply theoretical concepts such as corporate culture, organization schema, leadership styles, and corporate ethics. Field assignments direct students to identify ways in which their internship site encourages teamwork, to describe physical clues to indicate power and level of authority, to compare corporate values in centralized and decentralized systems, and to analyze the consequences of ethical dilemmas.

The Level 2 Seminar

The Level 2 seminar, "Fundamentals of Career Advancement," is common to all students, and focuses on using the workplace to gain information about skill and personal requirements for upward mobility. The text for the seminar, *Fundamentals of Career Advancement* (Ducat, 1994), emphasizes solving career dilemmas through self-assessment, gaining further education, learning from experience, researching reliable career information, and career networking. Using short practical exercises, research activities, and case studies, students gather and analyze information about career options and about four-year colleges. An important element in this Level 2 seminar is a "map" for extracting the greatest potential learning from any work experience by replicating strategies used by successful executives, seeking challenging assignments, coping with hardships, observing key people, and getting feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. Students visit the Campus Career Center to research career and educational opportunities.

Level 3 Seminars

As with the first seminar, both major-specific[11] and generic seminars are offered. The major-specific seminars demand the use of systematic research skills in an independent

[11] The four Level 3 major-specific seminars are (1) Accounting Information Systems for Decision-Making by Objectives, (2) What Do Managers Do: An Advanced Approach, (3) Advanced Computer Information Systems, and (4) School Food Service Management. Students in the education major complete a practicum arranged through that department.

and professional way. At the advanced level, students are expected to review theory while applying complex knowledge to their fieldwork experience. In the accounting seminar, for example, students follow a detailed outline for analyzing systems or information flows at the work site. Each week they gather components of a final, comprehensive paper and work in teams to evaluate data and to proofread draft papers. In the School Food Service Management seminar, students critique and design operational systems as well as develop personnel selection, training, and supervision practices. During our observation, these students examined promotion policies from legal, union, employee morale, and organizational perspectives.

The generic Level 3 seminar is titled "Humanism and Technology," and is designed to examine the major issues with which technology confronts modern society. The co-op seminar parallels a required liberal arts seminar of similar title, incorporating literature and popular press readings to present multiple perspectives. This co-op seminar is currently being modified to be applicable to the experiences of all students.

Instructors

The instructors for the co-op seminars come from different backgrounds. Some of them are local employers, who teach because they like to have personal involvement with students in the co-op program; for example, the vice-president of a hat manufacturing company located two blocks from the college; a senior director with the New York City Partnership, Inc., which coordinates public and private efforts to improve the economic environment of New York City; and the director of food service at Riker's Island all teach co-op seminars. Others are co-op faculty who are paid extra to teach a co-op seminar; they are obviously much more familiar with the structure and purpose of co-op and of the co-op seminars than are other instructors, although they lack the real-life experiences of employers. A small number are instructors or administrators in other divisions of LaGuardia, who teach co-op seminars as a logical extension of the theoretical skills taught in their classrooms.

One of the special advantages of instructors from the business world is that they can provide "true stories" from the workplace—descriptions of actual workplace situations and problems that students seem to find fascinating. Of course, students have their own "true stories" from their co-op placements, but the tales that employers tell have the weight of

experience and the stamp of authority. One interpretation of student fascination with these "true stories" is that they represent a way of teaching about the customs and folk ways of the workplace—dimensions of employment that cannot be taught in conventional classes, and that are crucial to the success of the job. In contrast, faculty are less likely to have the kinds of recent experiences in work that would provide a fund of "true stories."

Beyond an annual co-op orientation, seminar instructors from outside the college have no access to any form of staff development. Co-op faculty and administrators have access to various staff development activities, which often involve aspects of teaching; however, the yearlong seminar that promotes active instruction is available to only one or two co-op faculty each school term, and this is certainly not mandatory. Not surprisingly, given the differences in the backgrounds of instructors and the lack of any explicit attention to training, the emphases of different instructors vary considerably. Some focus on career exploration to the exclusion of the other purposes; others stress job-specific skills, or behavioral aspects of the job. And, of course, individual approaches to teaching vary considerably (as we describe in the section titled, "The Conduct of the Co-op Seminar"). However, LaGuardia has tried to anticipate the variation among instructors by developing a series of curriculum materials for the co-op seminars, which are described in the next section. The manuals allow an instructor without much background in education and without much prior experience in the co-op program to teach one of the co-op seminars.

The Use of Standardized Curriculum Materials

To some extent, the content of the co-op seminars has been standardized, particularly through the use of texts that have been written by various faculty members at LaGuardia and that provide topics, classroom exercises, and fieldwork assignments. (An exception to the standardized curriculum is the Level 3 generic seminar, "Humanism and Technology," a changing course that has not yet been fully elaborated.) Each co-op seminar session tends to encompass three to nine pages of text, one page of reading comprehension questions, a classroom simulation or case study from which students make judgments and draw conclusions, and a field assignment to be completed from observation or interview at the internship site.

Case studies and simulations often form a basis for problem-solving exercises. Student analysis of a particular case is guided by the instructor, relying in part on questions

embedded in the seminar text; for example, students analyzing the culture of the PepsiCo Company follow a set of questions to discern the primary mission, culture, organizational values, and the relationship of competitiveness to employee morale. Homework assignments link seminar theory to internship experiences by requiring highly specific observations such as contrasting the language style used among co-workers with that used with supervisors; describing corporate rituals practiced at the internship site; comparing home and work rituals, dress, and language style; and assessing the fit between personal values and the culture of the internship site.

In the past, the co-op program has tried to promote an approach to teaching that it calls T.A.R.—which stands for Teach – Apply – Reinforce—that reappears in many of the co-op seminar texts. For example, the workbook for the introductory seminar in accounting describes the teaching component in the following way: "You were taught certain concepts in Principles of Accounting II and Co-op Prep which will be the educational focus of your internship. These concepts are called T.A.R. concepts. You use T.A.R. workbooks to focus on these concepts." Then the application of concepts takes place in the work setting: "You will observe how T.A.R. concepts apply to your work setting during your first internship. You will use this *Internship Workbook* to guide you." Finally, concepts are reinforced: "In your internship seminar, you will reinforce the T.A.R. concepts you have observed in your internship setting." The T.A.R. approach could be considered an approach to teaching suitable for integrating work-based experiences into the classroom, particularly for instructors without experience in doing so. However, it is unclear how uniformly the T.A.R. concept is used by instructors: As new instructors have come into the program who were not associated with its development in the 1980s, the use of this pedagogical device seems to have weakened. This is, of course, part of the larger problem of maintaining a distinctive educational approach when there are many new and part-time faculty who need to be socialized to unfamiliar practices.

Many of the major-specific materials were written during the mid-1980s under a Department of Education grant for integrating cooperative education and classroom learning. Co-op administrators acknowledge that these materials are outdated due to changes in business technology and workplace practices; however, there are no funds available to update these materials, which are voluminous. The lack of funds is unfortunate for another reason: The process of writing the seminar texts during the 1980s apparently brought together co-op and "regular" faculty in ways that otherwise do not happen.

From our observation, the standardized curriculum reduces differences between instructors in content and focus, as well as overcomes many of the difficulties related to weak pedagogy. Even in cases where we observed a reliance on traditional lecture and poorly planned audiovisual materials, the students were clearly engaged by the topics of the co-op seminar. However, no attempt to "teacher-proof" a curriculum can be completely successful, and so the quality of instruction and the approach to teaching varies considerably among instructors (as we will see in the next section). Of course, this is precisely what happens in most educational institutions, including community colleges.[12] The only surprising element is that, while LaGuardia is one of the few community colleges to make teaching an institutionwide priority, they have not extended this emphasis on teaching to the co-op program.

The Multiple Purposes of the Co-op Seminars

In practice, the co-op seminars serve one of three purposes. The first is allowing students to explore the career options they face. The importance of career exploration, in our view, cannot be overstated: Many students come to community colleges unsure of what they want to do and trying to "get a life" for themselves. Even at LaGuardia, where students often apply and are accepted for a particular major, the co-op seminars allow students who have come from foreign countries and are unsure about American jobs and opportunities an avenue to evaluate their initial career decisions. Unfortunately, most community colleges provide little help for students trying to investigate their career options, and so they take courses aimlessly or enroll without clear intentions in the transfer program because it is the most obvious alternative.[13] However, the co-op seminars provide a combination of a work placement and time for reflection, a much more active form of career exploration and validation than is usually available in either high schools or community colleges. This results in a high rate of changes in major as students select careers matched

---

[12] This statement is based on an ongoing study directed by Norton Grubb of teaching in community colleges, based on observations of about 225 classrooms as well as interviews with instructors and administrators. Although community colleges pride themselves on being "teaching institutions," very few of them have made good teaching an institutional priority, and, because of this, high-quality teaching remains individual and idiosyncratic. LaGuardia is one of the few community colleges to make teaching a priority of the institution.

[13] These statements are based on a series of in-depth interviews with about 40 community college students in California, exploring their reasons for enrolling. The surprising result was that both the younger students, who had usually left high school without much sense of what they might do, and the older students, who had frequently been closed out of a promising career through no fault of their own, were trying to "find a life."

to their interests and aptitudes. One of the manuals for the generic Level 1 seminar, "Understanding Critical Issues at Work," expresses the benefit:

> Through LaGuardia's unique education program called Cooperative Education, you are temporarily allowed to leave the world of classroom academics and to enter the world of work for specific periods of time. "Co-op" gives you the chance to try out career fields to see if they are right for you. You may not fully realize at the present time how beneficial an opportunity this is to your own career development and discovery. "Co-op" will enable you to make better informed career decisions because it provides a real life laboratory to test your career goals and aspirations.

A second purpose, particularly of the major-specific Level 1 and Level 3 co-op seminars, is to present certain skills and competencies required on the job. Some of these are "academic" topics conventionally taught in classrooms, like accounting systems, computer programs, and specific approaches to management. In other cases, these may be behavioral competencies; for example, one of the co-op administrators stressed the value of the co-op seminar in acculturating foreign-born students to the norms of American workplaces by means of training students to look supervisors in the eye and to engage with fellow workers and supervisors in the apparently egalitarian and informal style of most work settings. However, unlike the presentation of job-related skills in conventional classrooms, these skills are presented in the co-op seminar as part of a total system of production, in which tasks are part of a larger organizational structure. In many cases, instructors make good use of the work placements students are in; for example, by contrasting specific accounting practices with textbook methods, or by locating particular tasks within a larger production system. In these ways, students can come to understand the ways in which the practices and competencies learned in the classroom are applied and modified on the job and, in turn, they can explore the origins of particular practices they observe in their work.

The third purpose of some co-op seminars is the more humanistic one of raising the larger issues about work—for example, its influence on individuals and on society. In many ways this is similar to the intent of general education requirements, except that students can use their own specific employment—rather than fabricated or contrived descriptions of employment—to explore the larger social, ethical, political, and moral themes associated with working. However, most students in the "Humanism and Technology" seminar are liberal arts majors (since most other students take major-specific Level 3 seminars), and so the potential purpose is less well-developed than the other two.

The Flexible Purposes of the Co-op Seminar: Changes Over Time

Over the past decade, the co-op seminar has undergone a number of intentional changes in purpose and in content. Until about 1990, the Level 1 and Level 3 seminars were major-specific, with registration limited to students with shared career goals and courses. Fiscal constraints made the low enrollments in some of these courses untenable, and the college began to develop a series of more generic seminars. Interestingly, generic seminars offer a number of benefits in both philosophy and practice. The mobility of workers and the changing nature of work proscribe narrow career preparation, and a mixed population of students within a co-op seminar offers a wider perspective on possible careers. In addition, all careers share a core of employability skills, including an ability to understand the larger system in which one completes discrete tasks and an appreciation of the cultural norms of a particular work site. In creating generic seminars, LaGuardia has moved closer to a metacognitive approach to experiential learning in which students gain a "map" for understanding both the current internship site and future employment opportunities. The change also reflects the shift in Heinemann's thinking about co-op programs away from the conception of co-op as a kind of laboratory for the seminars to a conception of the co-op placement as an experience to be examined from multiple perspectives and disciplines.

The co-op seminars offer flexibility in other ways as well. An example is the food service management program and its associated seminar. Under the joint auspices of the School Employees Union and LaGuardia, experienced entry-level school cafeteria employees who show management potential are nominated for the training required to qualify for food service manager. Nominees who fail to meet the skill requirements at LaGuardia receive tutoring through a union-sponsored program. Frequently, students who enroll in the food service management co-op program elect to complete their degrees, encouraged by a course schedule adapted to their work hours. Interviews with students, mostly mature women, enrolled in this program indicate great satisfaction with the union-supported tutoring in basic skills and with the accommodation LaGuardia has made in scheduling.

THE CONDUCT OF THE CO-OP SEMINARS

In general, instructional methods in the co-op seminar incorporate a range of practices including traditional lecture, class discussion about an identified topic, simulations, role-play, and faculty sharing of personal experiences ("true stories"). Not surprisingly, given the variation in the backgrounds of instructors and the lack of instructor training, instructional methods vary according to faculty expertise and seminar topic.[14]

In one Level 1 seminar we observed, an entire class was filled with "teacher talk" about a series of articles he had distributed. The instructor stood in the front of a conventional classroom, with students seated in rows facing the instructor, and asked a series of factual questions about newspaper ads related to employment opportunities. By and large, the questions required students to give the literal meaning of the ads, and were close-ended questions that students could answer without any reference to their own jobs. Only one open-ended question was asked—about why the secretarial field is still dominated by women. The instructor distributed a handout about ten ways to keep a job, and another about the ten best and worst jobs within the computer field. He began a video, but it proved to be the wrong one (it was an old Ed Sullivan show); he then reverted to a series of factual questions and answers about medians and means and about the instructions for a project due at the end of the course.[15] In addition to his unengaging didactic format, the instructor missed a number of opportunities to add to the knowledge and understanding of his students. He reinforced career stereotypes—that secretaries are paid poorly, that men are more likely to go into computer fields that pay more—without asking students to think about the economic and social aspects of these stereotypes. He elaborated his own biases, particularly about the difficulty of the Internet; and, in many ways, he failed to connect the content of the class to the work placements of students. Given the interminable lecture-style presentation, the attentiveness of students was quite high: Evidently the content of this course was engaging to students, even if the method of instruction was not.

---

[14] During a one-week visit, Norena Badway observed 12 seminars, with observations ranging in duration from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. We did not observe anything like the majority of co-op seminars, and the time spent in each was much less than the 6 to 12 hours of observation that have been typical in the study of community college teaching mentioned in footnote 10. However, we have no reason to think that the classes we observed were skewed in any particular way, and we interpret our observations as suggestive of the range of teaching that takes place.

[15] The pattern of instructors asking close-ended, factual questions—sometimes known as IRE, for inquiry-response-evaluation—is quite common in community colleges; while such a class may appear to have some discussion, in fact it is completely teacher-dominated and fact-centered.

In other cases, however, we saw instructors taking very different approaches, posing questions that asked students to think critically about employment practices and to evaluate their own work placements. One class, taught by the vice-president of a nearby firm, is organized around a set of 14 "analysis questions" about the accounting system used in the students' work sites. In the class we observed, the instructor led a whole-class discussion about four particular questions that would serve as the basis for future papers; then the class broke into small groups to compare their own internships in the light of the four analysis questions, and then discussed the preliminary results with the class as a whole. In general, students reported a variety of different business practices in their workplaces, and were initially baffled; however, they came to understand why such variation in practice arises, and the instructor (from the business world himself) helped to both explain and justify these variations. The level of student engagement was very high—both because the exercise was intrinsically interesting to students studying accounting and because the students felt some pressure to develop draft answers in class, where they could have the support of their peers and the instructor. While the practice of doing a draft for a future paper with help from others is not widely practiced in standard academic courses, this kind of cooperative approach is much more typical of workplace settings. And, unlike other classes we observed, the practices in students' co-op placements were central to this seminar.

In general, however, the co-op seminars seemed to be dominated by lecture and by "teacher talk," rather than by the kinds of open-ended questions that would get students to reflect about their own work experiences and compare them with the skills and competencies learned in the classroom. In the worst of these cases, instructors missed important opportunities to add to the knowledge and understanding of the students, often by failing to respond appropriately to their questions. Instructors reinforced career stereotypes that secretaries are paid poorly and that men are more likely to go into computer fields that pay more without asking students to think about the economic and social aspects of these stereotypes. These instructors elaborate their own biases—for example, the difficulty of using the Internet or that mothers of young children should not work—and missed opportunities to connect the content of the class to cultural understandings about work or the internship experience such as building potential career ladders based on students' present employment or contrasting formal education and experience as vehicles for skill development. In a couple of particularly frustrating instances, seminar instructors completely missed the contrast in student expectations about education as a means of

gaining "insider information" about how to live in American society versus a means to achieve greater earnings. Given the uninspired lecture-style presentations, the attentiveness of students was surprisingly high; evidently the content of the co-op seminars is engaging to students, even if the method of instruction is not.

Even among those instructors who tend to dominate in lecture-style presentation, a crucial difference is the willingness of instructors to respond to student interests and puzzlement—that is, to exploit the opportunities that student initiative presents. One instructor, for example, dominated the classroom with a kind of lecture on self-improvement, the importance of "good attitude," and other aspects of finding a job; however, she was also receptive to student questions, and used them as opportunities to expand students' basic knowledge, to inform them about resources for selecting careers that they otherwise were unaware of, and to bring in current information about job futures and how new careers are taught at LaGuardia.

To be sure, classroom interactions are only one element of the co-op seminars. Most of the co-op seminars involve writing. Examples of writing assignments include explaining the procedures used to convert input data into useful information through both a flowchart and a descriptive narrative; evaluating the effect of a supervisor's leadership style on the student's internship performance; evaluating alternatives for decisions that they made at their internship; and creating an "agency profile" by analyzing the student's workplace in relation to the community it services. These writing exercises reinforce writing abilities, and students are judged on the basis of standard writing techniques as well as content. However, rather than methods of teaching writing, these exercises are best understood as forms of "writing to learn," in which writing is used as a mechanism to get students to clarify their own interpretations, and then to consider alternatives with the help of the instructor. They, therefore, provide some opportunities for student initiative and reflection that classrooms dominated by teacher talk do not.

The range of teaching approaches in the co-op seminar is no different from what we have observed in community colleges generally. Even in what seem to be seminar formats, teacher talk and lecture-style presentations are common. But, however common didactic and teacher-centered instruction is, this approach within the co-op seminar is especially unfortunate in our view. The major purposes of the co-op seminar, as expressed by the college and by most instructors, go far beyond information transfer—the purpose most

associated with didactic methods.[16] The crucial purposes, instead, are to allow students to think about their career options, to understand the nature of their work and work in general, to analyze the value of classroom learning on the job, and to explore the large humanistic and social issues surrounding employment—all questions that are intrinsically interpretive, and that cry out for more student-centered, constructivist approaches to teaching in the tradition of meaning-making.[17] This suggests that if schools are to adopt some practice like the co-op seminar as a way of connecting work-based and school-based learning, it is crucial to be self-conscious about the approaches to teaching used, and to institute the training and staff development necessary to develop alternative approaches to seminars.

CONCLUSIONS: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS

The co-op seminars at LaGuardia Community College have been developed for almost the same reasons as the connecting activities of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act—to link school-based and work-based learning. It is, we think, relatively clear that an approach like the co-op seminars can be successful in that role. In doing so, there are a number of lessons from the LaGuardia experience that should be considered in setting up such connecting activities:

- All students at LaGuardia, whether occupational students or liberal arts majors, are required to complete a series of work-based placements. This creates a large student population in co-op, which, in turn, creates a culture in LaGuardia in which co-op comes to be appreciated. In contrast, within an institution where only a few students are enrolled in work-based learning, it would be impossible to generate a supportive culture around STW programs or to develop anything like the co-op seminars.[18]

---

[16] Of course, many individuals would claim that didactic methods are not effective even in information transfer.

[17] For an introduction to the approach of meaning-making, contrasted with the more conventional approach of "skills and drills," see Grubb and Kalman (1994). Approaches in the meaning-making tradition are precisely the methods that the staff development efforts at LaGuardia Community College have promoted, and that are more widely used there than in any other community college we have observed.

[18] We are particularly concerned with what appears to be a common development under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act—a practice of designating a local organization to find work placements available to students from any of the schools in a community. In this organization of STW, there is no natural

The presence of large numbers of students in co-op also creates the economies of scale necessary to create certain elements—like the Co-op Prep class and the co-op seminars themselves—that support work-based learning. The sizes of these classes tend to be between 15 and 25, and with smaller numbers it would be much more expensive to provide such classes. In addition, the constant refinement of the co-op program in general and the co-op seminars in particular could not take place unless there were substantial numbers of students enrolled.

- A work-based program (like cooperative education) is much more than a simple experience at work. There are many different elements with potential educative power, ranging from work experience coordinators, to fellow students, to fellow workers, to intentionally structured exercises like the Co-op Prep course and the co-op seminar. Giving some thought about the potential role of each—rather than, for example, thinking of some of these elements (like co-op faculty) as purely administrative and others (like the role of fellow students) as inconsequential—can enhance the educational potential of any work-based experience.

  Similarly, work experience is not an end in itself, with a self-evident educational potential. In the LaGuardia approach, the work placement is viewed as a laboratory for applying the concepts introduced in classroom instruction, allowing students to relate their particular daily routines and tasks to the larger institutions in which they live.

- At LaGuardia, work placements and seminars are started after a student has completed one or more courses in his or her major (as well as after any remedial work is completed). This allows students to begin their work and the related seminars with a foundation of relevant knowledge.[19]

- In many institutions, the responsibility for work experience programs is given to existing administrators (and instructors), adding to their burdens and virtually guaranteeing that work-based learning will be badly neglected. The LaGuardia experience clarifies that work-based placements, and the co-op seminars associated

---

involvement of any one school, and within a particular school there will be too few students in STW activities to create a supportive culture of integrative seminars.

[19] See also the discussion of quality control mechanisms in the Cincinnati co-op programs and their contribution to creating a "high-quality equilibrium" in Grubb and Villeneuve (1995) and Villeneuve and Grubb (1996).

with them, require adequate resources for coordination and instruction. (Indeed, this is a logical activity on which to spend STWOA funds.) The development of connecting activities like the co-op seminar also requires stability (including consistent support from administrators over time), since developing the co-op seminars at LaGuardia has been a process of successive refinement and adjustment over two decades.

- The selection of faculty for connecting activities like the co-op seminars needs to be carefully considered. Individuals who come from the world of work have special advantages, since they can provide "true stories" and other forms of socialization about workplaces; indeed, this seems to be an ideal way to involve individuals from the business community. However, depending on their backgrounds and instructional proclivities, co-op and other faculty have certain advantages as well. Finally, little thought has been given to the inclusion of non-co-op faculty in the LaGuardia co-op seminars, though the potential for doing so as a way of reinforcing certain academic content is high.

- The pedagogy of connecting activities like the co-op seminar should be carefully considered. Although didactic instruction based on the methods of "skills and drills" is certainly common in high schools and community colleges, this is probably the least effective approach to the issues raised in the co-op seminar.

  An alternative way to assure the quality of connecting activities like the co-op seminar is to adopt standardized content, texts, and learning activities as the LaGuardia program has. In this way, all students share a common core of content and learning, no matter what the idiosyncrasies of individual instructors are. Quality control can also be maintained through classroom observations by administrators and student evaluations. However, we caution against the idea that any form of instruction can be "teacher proofed," since student understanding of employment-related competencies and interpretation of career possibilities cannot be achieved simply by programming teachers to follow a set curriculum.

- If pedagogy is important, then instructor training cannot be neglected—particularly if instructors have varied backgrounds. There are many reasons to think that, without special intervention, most teachers would use conventional didactic, teacher-dominated approaches—community college faculty are not required to

undertake training in instruction; the criteria for employment often neglect pedagogical expertise; and most individuals without training in instruction, including most individuals recruited from industry, are likely to teach the way they were taught, again leading in most cases to ineffective instructional methods. Although revising an instructor's approach to teaching can be difficult (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988, Ch. 10), we see no way of avoiding this task if the promises of connecting activities are to be realized.

- The co-op seminar (and potentially other connecting activities) can have multiple purposes. While the main purpose might be that of allowing students to see how classroom instruction is applied in work, the other purposes associated with LaGuardia's efforts—career exploration, and the analysis of large social and humanistic issues connected to employment—are powerful, too, and may in fact be even more valuable aspects for individuals like high school students who are confronting occupational choices. While individual instructors and students will emphasize different purposes in different ways, the varying needs of students can be better served if a program retains a multiplicity of purposes rather than imposing a single conception.

- Above all, it has been discouraging to find that work-based activities and classroom-based instruction are so independent, even in institutions like LaGuardia and the Cincinnati colleges with the longest commitment to co-op education. At LaGuardia, this division exists in the lack of communication between the co-op program and the "regular" programs; at the Cincinnati colleges it can be seen as a potential rivalry between the co-op programs and academic instruction, particularly in one institution that is changing from a technical institute to a comprehensive community college. The divide is evidently so deep that a commitment to work-based learning is not enough to lead to a real integration of the two. A continued separation in STW programs is, of course, detrimental to students, who then have to figure out for themselves the commonalties in the two forms of learning. More seriously, over the long run such a separation threatens the very existence of work-based learning, since instructors uncommitted to work-based learning will vote against it at the first sign of fiscal distress. The most discouraging aspect of the LaGuardia program is that, although it is a "co-op college" and has refined its co-op programs continuously, the current fiscal crisis is still a threat to co-op. It has been

difficult over the years to maintain the culture of a "co-op college," particularly with the instability associated with the growth of new faculty and of part-time instructors with little time or resources to improve their teaching abilities.

The only way in which STW programs can find a permanent place in schools and colleges, then, is for the work-based component to become so central to the educational purposes of the institutions that it becomes as unthinkable to give it up as it would be to abandon math, English, or science. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act provides both the impetus and resources to accomplish this—in ways that can redress the century-old inadequacies of providing school-based preparation alone.

REFERENCES

Ducat, D. (1994). *Fundamentals of career advancement* (Revised ed.). New York: LaGuardia Community College, Division of Cooperative Education.

Gabelnick, F., MacGregor, J., Matthews, R., & Smith, B. (1990, Spring). Learning communities: Creating connections among students, faculty, and disciplines. In R. Young (Ed.), *New directions for teaching and learning* series. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Goldberger, S., Kazis, R., & O'Flanagan, M. K. (1994, January). *Learning through work: Designing and implementing quality worksite learning for high school students.* New York: Manpower Development Research Corporation.

Grubb, W. N. (1995, Winter). The sub-baccalaureate labor market and the advantages of co-operative education. *Journal of Cooperative Education, 30*(2), 6-19.

Grubb, W. N., Dickinson, T., Giordano, L., & Kaplan, G. (1992, December). *Betwixt and between: Education, skills, and employment in sub-baccalaureate labor markets* (MDS-470). Berkeley: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California at Berkeley.

Grubb, W. N., & Kalman, J. (1994, November). Relearning to earn: The role of remediation in vocational education and job training. *American Journal of Education, 103*(1), 54-93.

Grubb, W. N., & Villeneuve, J. C. (1995, May). *Co-operative education in Cincinnati: Implications for school-to-work programs in the U.S.* Paper prepared for the Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Congress.

Hamilton, S. (1990). *Apprenticeship for adulthood: Preparing youth for the future.* New York: The Free Press.

Heinemann, H. (1983). Toward a pedagogy for co-operative education. *Journal of Cooperative Education, 19*(3), 14-26.

Heinemann, H., & DeFalco, A. (1990). Dewey's pragmatism: A philosophical foundation for co-operative education. *Journal of Cooperative Education*, *27*(1), 38-43.

Heinemann, H., DeFalco, A., & Smelkinson, M. (1991). Work-experience enriched education. *Journal of Cooperative Education*, *28*(1), 17-33.

Matthews, R. S. (1994, Spring). *Notes from the field: Reflections on collaborative learning at LaGuardia*. Long Island City, NY: LaGuardia Community College, Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Nesoff, P. (Ed.), Dunner, I., Gugante, L., Green, M., Oliver, F., Perry, H., Reyes, M., & Wetherington, L. (1990. January). *Cooperative education student handbook.* New York: LaGuardia Community College, Division of Cooperative Education.

Pauly, E., Kopp, H., & Haimson, J. (1995). *Home-grown lessons: Innovative programs linking work and high school.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Stern, D., Finkelstein, N., Stone, J., Latting, J., & Dornsife, C. (1995). *School-to-work: Research on programs in the United States.* Bristol, PA: Falmer Press.

Tharp, R., & Gallimore, R. (1988). *Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning, and schooling in social context.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Villeneuve, J. C., & Grubb, W. N. (1996). *Indigenous school-to-work programs: Lessons from Cincinnati's co-op education* (MDS-702). Berkeley: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California at Berkeley.

Weintraub, J. (1992). *Student perception of effectiveness of sources of learning.* New York: LaGuardia Community College, Research Evaluation and Systems, Division of Cooperative Education.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

REPRODUCTION BASIS

☐ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☐ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").